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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Horton and Wohl Revisited: Exploring Viewers' Experience of Parasocial Interaction

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*Linking back to D. Horton and R. Wohl (1956), the present approach conceptualizes and empirically examines viewers' parasocial interaction experience with a TV performer. Causes and outcomes of parasocial interaction experience are examined. To this end, a new Experience of Parasocial Interaction (EPSI) scale is introduced. In a 2 (Bodily Addressing) × 2 (Verbal Addressing) between-subjects experiment (*N = 198*) viewers reported a more intense parasocial experience if they were addressed by a TV performer on a bodily and verbal level. In addition, the more viewers perceived the performer to be attractive and the stronger their perspective-taking ability, the more intense their parasocial experience. Stronger parasocial experience resulted in higher commitment to social norms and a greater enjoyment of the exposure situation.*

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Since Horton and Wohl introduced the concept in 1956, parasocial interaction developed into a popular field of Communication Science (Giles, 2002). In their seminal article, Horton and Wohl understood parasocial interaction as a "simulacrum of conversational give and take" (p. 215) that takes place between users and mass media performers, particularly television performers. Horton and Wohl considered parasocial interaction an (illusionary) experience of the viewer, who would feel like being in an interaction with a television performer, despite of the nonreciprocal exposure situation. In a follow-up publication, Horton and Strauss (1957) further explicated the experiential qualities of parasocial interaction, by arguing that a "parasocial interaction [is experienced by the user] as immediate, personal, and reciprocal, but these qualities are illusory and are presumably not shared by the speaker" (p. 580).

In contrast to this initial understanding of parasocial interaction, many of the later studies in the field conceptualized parasocial interaction as a kind of long-term identification or parasocial relationship with a media performer (e.g., Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Rubin & Perse, 1987; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985). For

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example, Grant, Guthrie, and Ball-Rokeach (1991) defined "parasocial interaction [as] a relationship between viewers and television personalities" (p. 782). Rubin and McHugh (1987) also considered "parasocial interaction [as] a one-sided interpersonal relationship that television viewers establish with media characters" (p. 280). The same idea of parasocial interaction underlies the most popular measure in the field, the Parasocial Interaction scale (PSI scale, Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985). Therefore, the scale primarily captures users' friendships toward media performers, rather than users' feeling of being involved in an interaction with the performer during media exposure (Auter & Palmgreen, 2000; Cohen, 2009; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008).

The present approach goes back to the original idea of parasocial interaction by Horton and Wohl (1956) and examines parasocial interaction as TV viewers' experience of being in a "conversational give-and-take" with a TV performer. This approach seems fruitful, because viewers' experience to be part of a social interaction with a TV performer during exposure is conceptually different from an enduring positive relationship that viewers' establish with a TV performer (Giles, 2002). To explore users' illusionary experience of being engaged in real social interaction with a TV performer during exposure, the present paper introduces a newly developed scale: the EPSI scale. In addition, the present paper discusses and empirically tests plausible causes and outcomes of a parasocial experience. A TV performer's addressing style is examined as a crucial determinant of a parasocial experience, and the perceived attractiveness of a TV performer as well as viewers' ability to adopt the perspective of other persons are examined as additional determinants. Viewers' commitment to social norms during exposure and their enjoyment of the exposure episode are investigated as important outcomes of a parasocial interaction experience.

Conceptualizing the parasocial interaction experience

Following Horton and Wohl (1956), parasocial interaction is "one-sided, nondialectical, controlled by the performer, and not susceptible of mutual development" (p. 215). However, TV users are supposed to experience parasocial encounters completely differently, namely as "immediate, personal, and reciprocal" (Horton & Strauss, 1957, p. 580). Accordingly, parasocial encounters provide the users with the illusion of being engaged in a social interaction with the TV performer. "The audience responds [on TV performers] with something more than mere running observation; it is, as it were, subtly insinuated into the programme's action and [. . .] transformed into a group which observes and participates in the show by turns" (Horton & Wohl, 1956, p. 215). Accordingly, viewers may experience a parasocial interaction in a similar way they would experience a real social interaction (Chory-Assad & Yanen, 2005).

The feeling of being in a social interaction

Horton and colleagues did not conceptualize the experiential facets of parasocial experiences in every detail. A look into more recent research on social interaction helps to further conceptualize parasocial experiences (e.g., Biocca, Burgoon, Harms,

& Stoner, 2001; Goffman, 1963, 1983; Malle & Hodges, 2005). Recent psychological research suggests that in any social encounter individuals engage in mindreading to infer the mental states of other people being present (Malle, 2005; Malle & Hodges, 2005). In contrast to more reflective ways of perspective-taking, mindreading occurs automatically. Automatic mindreading results in intuitive feelings about the other rather than elaborate beliefs (Chartrand, Maddux, & Lakin, 2005; Malle, 2005; Sally, 2000). Because mindreading is a highly automatic activity underlying any social encounter, it seems plausible that also TV viewers automatically engage in mindreading when they encounter TV performers. On the basis of their mindreading activity, they may quickly establish a feeling to be involved in a social interaction with the TV performer. For example, if a TV performer gazes directly into the camera, users may automatically acquire the feeling that the performer would look at them, personally. The present approach builds on the assumption that a parasocial experience primarily results from viewers' highly automatic mindreading processes. As such, a parasocial experience can be considered an immediate and natural response of TV users (Horton & Strauss, 1957).

Mutual awareness and attention

More specifically, just like any other social encounter, a parasocial experience should be accompanied by an immediate sense of mutual awareness and mutual attention with the TV performer (Goffmann, 1983). A sense of mutual awareness and attention builds on automatic mindreading activities (Malle & Hodges, 2005). Mutual awareness and attention imply that an individual is not only aware of another person, but also senses that the other person is aware of him or her, and that the other person knows that they are mutually aware of each other (Perner & Wimmer, 1985). "Persons must sense that they are [. . .] perceived in whatever they are doing, including their experiencing of others, [. . .and that they are] perceived in this sensing of being perceived" (Goffman, 1963, p. 17). If viewers read out the mind of a TV performer, they may quickly acquire the impression that the performer is aware of them and pays attention to them. This seems particularly likely if the TV performer displays natural cues that normally initiate social interaction (Goffman, 1963). For example, a TV performer may try to establish eye contact with the viewers or may act as if he or she would personally talk to them. These cues may effectively evoke the feeling in viewers that the TV performer is aware of them and pays attention to them. Because viewers, while watching, are also aware of the TV performer, they should acquire a sense of mutual awareness and attention in the exposure situation.

Mutual adjustment

Next to a sense of mutual awareness and attention, TV users may also acquire a feeling of reciprocity in terms of mutual adjustment. If interactants are mutually aware of each other, they also tend to adjust their behavior throughout the encounter (Goffmann, 1983). For example, in an interaction, people tend to synchronize their

body posture, gesture, facial expressions, timing and structure of speech, heart rate, and more (Chartrand et al., 2005; Malle, 2005). Accordingly, TV viewers' parasocial experiences may also be characterized by a sense of mutual adjustment with TV performers. For example, viewers may not only respond to the behavior of a TV performer, but may develop the feeling that the TV performer responds on their behavior as well.

Taken together, the present approach defines a parasocial experience as an immediate feeling or impression that results from users' automatic mindreading activities. The experience is characterized by a felt reciprocity with a TV performer that comprises a sense of mutual awareness, attention, and adjustment.

Potential causes and consequences of a parasocial experience

Viewers' parasocial experience may be influenced by various factors and may lead to several consequences. The present approach reviews typical causes and consequences of parasocial interaction that have been addressed in the literature, and discusses how these may be related to parasocial experiences. A TV performer's addressing style and attractiveness, and viewers' cognitive perspective-taking ability are discussed as factors potentially influencing a parasocial experience.

Causes of a parasocial experience

Addressing style of TV performer

Parasocial interaction is strongly influenced by the behavior of a TV performer (Horton & Strauss, 1957; Horton & Wohl, 1956). The way how a TV performer adjusts his or her performance in order to *address* the audience seems to be of particular importance ("addressing style"; Auter, 1992; Auter & Moore, 2003; Cohen, 2001; Hartmann & Klimmt, 2005; Mancini, 1988). Similar to real interaction, a TV performer's addressing style seems part and parcel to the initiation and maintenance of parasocial interaction (Cohen, 2001). For example, in a survey study by Hartmann and Klimmt (2005), TV users watching an episode of a German crime series reported stronger levels of parasocial processing (measured with a preliminary version of the Parasocial Process Scale; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008) the more they felt addressed by the main character of the show. In an experiment by Auter (1992), viewers watching episodes of a TV sitcom in which the main characters looked directly into the camera reported stronger parasocial interaction (measured by the PSI scale) than viewers watching episodes without addressing.

Bodily addressing

TV performers' addressing style may also initiate and intensify users' parasocial experiences. TV performers can address viewers on a bodily (or nonverbal) and a verbal level (DeVito, 2001). TV performers directly address viewers on a bodily level if they adjust their head and eyes toward the viewers (i.e., toward the camera; Malandro, Barker, & Barker, 1989). Particularly eye-gazing is considered a crucial mechanism in

the initiation of social encounters (Goffmann, 1963). Eye-gazing triggers mindreading activities (Malle & Hodges, 2005), establishes a perfectly reciprocal situation between two individuals (Simmel, 1921), and can foster immediate impressions of intimacy (Ellsworth & Ross, 1975). "When we look into each other's eyes, [. . .] we have a visceral feeling of connection, overlap, and oneness" (Sally, 2000, p. 582). It seems plausible that a TV performers' addressing style is a crucial determinant of viewer' parasocial experience. Accordingly, we assume that:

H1a: Viewers' that are directly addressed by a TV performer on a bodily level report a more intense parasocial experience than viewers that are not addressed on a bodily level.

Verbal addressing

TV performers may also address the audience on a verbal level (DeVito, 2001). They can directly refer to viewers, for example, in opening statements like "good evening ladies and gentlemen" or by making remarks during a show like "our viewers probably do not understand why we are doing this." But TV performers can also include viewers on a verbal level by adjusting their wording and tone of voice to the audience. For example, if trying to address an audience of young children, TV performers may heighten and soften their voice, and may only use words in their messages that children can understand. An adult audience may not feel addressed by such messages. Accordingly, adults watching the TV performer may not feel like being in a social interaction with the performer. Therefore, we expect:

H1b: Viewers' that are directly addressed by a TV performer on a verbal level report a more intense parasocial experience than viewers that are not addressed on a verbal level.

Perceived attractiveness

The perceived attractiveness of a TV performer has been considered another important determinant in past research on parasocial interaction (Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008; Turner, 1993). The popular PSI scale (Rubin et al., 1985) even includes the perceived attractiveness of TV performer as an aspect of parasocial interaction. The notion that the perceived attractiveness of a media character intensifies parasocial interaction is also supported in a meta-analytic study by Schiappa et al. (2007; $N = 7$ studies).

Perceived attractiveness may also influence viewers' parasocial experiences. If viewers consider a TV performer attractive, they may be more motivated to cherish the illusion of a social encounter. In addition, viewers may pay more attention to the performer, particularly to bodily parts that may intensify the parasocial experience like the performer's face or eyes. Perceived attractiveness may thus increase the chance that viewers feel addressed by the performer, and acquire an impression of mutual awareness, attention, and adjustment. Accordingly, the following hypothesis seems plausible:

H2: The greater the perceived attractiveness of a TV performer, the more intense viewers' parasocial experience.

Perspective-taking ability

Another determinant of a parasocial experience may be viewers' general ability to adopt the perspective of other persons (Ellis, Streeter, & Engelbrecht, 1983; Tsao, 1996). This perspective-taking ability is sometimes addressed as cognitive empathy (Davis, Hull, Young, & Warren, 1987). Tsao (1996) shows that cognitive empathy is linked to more intense parasocial interaction (measured by the short PSI scale, Rubin & Perse, 1987). Viewers' general ability to adopt perspectives of other persons may also intensify parasocial experiences, because this skill may ease their automatic mindreading activities. Accordingly, viewers with a stronger perspective-taking ability may more readily form the impression that a TV performer is aware of them and pays attention to them. They may also more readily feel that the TV performer knows about the mutuality of this awareness and attention. Accordingly, we hypothesize that:

H3: The stronger viewers' cognitive perspective-taking ability, the more intense their parasocial experience.

Outcomes of a parasocial experience

Viewers' parasocial experiences may be associated with various outcomes. In line with potential outcomes discussed in the parasocial interaction literature (Tsao, 2004), the present approach focuses on two basic possible outcomes—viewers' commitment to norms and their enjoyment of the exposure situation.

Commitment to social norms

In general, social interaction involves expectations about how others will react (Burgoon & Le Poire, 1993). Often, these expectations follow context-based rules or norms (Bennet & Bennet, 1970). Interaction partners often silently agree upon the set of social norms that is supposed to guide their interaction (Goffman, 1983), and they adjust their behavior accordingly. Social interaction therefore usually accompanies a certain commitment to social norms (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005). A violation of salient social norms may feel impolite and even embarrassing.

Because a parasocial experience implies that users feel like being part of a social interaction, it may also be accompanied by an increased commitment to social norms (Horton & Strauss, 1957). For example, if experiencing a parasocial interaction, users may feel a certain obligation not to pick their nose in front of the TV performer. Although such a feeling may not appear rational upon conscious reflection, it may still be automatically triggered by a parasocial experience. Accordingly, it can be assumed that:

H4: The more intense viewers' parasocial experience, the more they feel committed to social norms.

Enjoyment

Another potential outcome of a parasocial experience is enjoyment (Klimmt, Hartmann, & Schramm, 2006). Survey studies have shown that people seek parasocial

interaction for entertainment purposes (Levy & Windahl, 1984; Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rayburn, 1980). In a study by Hartmann and Klimmt (2005), viewers' parasocial processing of a TV character was positively related to their enjoyment. In an experiment by Auter and Davis (1991), viewers rated TV clips as more meaningful and enjoyable if the appearing characters looked directly into the camera than if they did not. These findings suggest that viewers enjoy being directly addressed by TV performers and that they like to experience parasocial interaction. Accordingly, it can be hypothesized that:

H5: The more intense the parasocial experience, the more viewers enjoy the exposure situation.

Method

Design and approach

To test the hypotheses, a 2 (Bodily Addressing Yes vs. No) × 2 (Verbal Addressing Yes vs. No) between-subjects online experiment on viewers' parasocial experience was conducted.

Sample

Two hundred fourteen potential respondents were personally e-mailed with the request to participate in the experiment. An additional 50 people were approached via a Dutch social network Web site. Of all contacted people, 224 started the online experiment, and 198 respondents completed it. Two-thirds of the final sample of participants were female (131 women and 67 men). Age of participants varied between 15 and 78 years, with a mean of 30.9 years. A majority of the participants were students (86%) or already obtained a university degree.

Stimulus and procedure

In the experiment, participants watched a short TV clip.[1] The clip was specifically recorded for the experiment. In the clip, a female person (the "TV performer") talked about what she personally thought about TV-call-in-shows. The experiment manipulated the way the TV performer addressed the viewers. The performer either talked directly into the camera, thus seemingly addressing viewers in a direct way with her body posture (bodily addressing), or she was portrayed from her side while talking (no bodily addressing; see Figure 1). Verbal addressing was manipulated by varying the way how the female performer talked to the audience. The performer either adjusted her words in such a way as if she would talk to adults, which suited the grown-up sample of the present study (verbal addressing). Or she verbally addressed young children and adjusted both the tone of her voice and her wording accordingly (no verbal addressing). Each of the four TV clips was about 3 minutes long.

The experiment was conducted online. After following the hyperlink to the experiment, respondents saw an introductory screen that welcomed them. A cover

Figure 1 Illustration of the manipulation of TV performer's bodily addressing style. The left picture shows how the female TV performer looked directly into the camera throughout the clip, thus addressing participants on a bodily level. The right picture shows how only the TV performer's profile was recorded (with her head being turned 90° to the camera), indicating no bodily addressing.

story was told that they would watch a TV clip that was produced as an assignment for a university course in presentation skills. Participants were told that the clip was filmed by a student of the course. Respondents were then randomly assigned onto one of the four conditions. Confirming a successful randomization, neither gender, $F(3, 194) = 1.64, p = .18$, nor age, $F(3, 194) = 0.79, p = .50$, of participants differed significantly between conditions. Subsequently, one of the four film clips was shown. Participants were asked to watch the clip like they would normally watch television at home. After the clip, participants answered the initial item pool of the EPSI scale (see below), as well as a short version of the PSI scale by Rubin and Perse (1987), and a short version of the Parasocial Process scale by Schramm and Hartmann (2008).[2] In the final section of the experiment, attractiveness, perspective-taking ability, commitment to norms, and enjoyment were assessed. The total experiment took about 15 minutes.

Measures

Unless stated otherwise, all measures were constructed as 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*I do not agree at all*) to 7 (*I totally agree*).

Parasocial experience (EPSI scale)

To assess the intensity of viewers' parasocial experience, a new scale was constructed: the EPSI scale.[3] The EPSI scale was derived from an initial item pool of 38 items. The initial item pool was based on the present theoretical conceptualization of a parasocial experience. Accordingly, items measured a user's sense of mutual

awareness, mutual attention, and mutual adjustment with the TV performer. Higher item scores indicated a more intense parasocial experience. Following standard steps of item selection in scale development (Clark & Watson, 1995), a final set of six items was selected from the initial item pool. The selected items did not only share good psychometric qualities, but also reflect the theoretical construct in a plausible way. The final EPSI scale is shown in Table 1.

Items 1 to 3 of the final EPSI scale reflect users' perceived mutual awareness with the TV performer. This perception includes viewers' impression that the TV performer was aware of them (Item 1), seemed to know that they were there (Item 2), and seemed to know that they were aware of him or her (Item 3). Item 4 reflects a crucial aspect of sensed mutual attention, namely that the TV performer seemed to know that the viewers were paying attention to him or her. The last two items of the scale reflect viewers' impression of a mutual adjustment. Item 5 reflects viewers' impression that it felt like the TV performer knew they would react to his or her behavior; item 6 captures viewers' impression that the TV performer seemed to adjust his or her own behavior to their behavior.

Preliminary tests confirmed good psychometric qualities of the EPSI scale. The scale was internally consistent ($\alpha = .87$). All items had a good corrected item-total correlation above the recommended threshold of .5 (Fisseni, 1997). In line with expectations, a Varimax-rotated exploratory factor analysis of the six items of the EPSI scale suggested a one-factorial solution (factor loadings are displayed in Table 1). Moderate zero-order correlations show that the EPSI scale measures something different than the PSI scale (Rubin & Perse, 1987) ($r = .43$, $p < .01$) and the Parasocial Process scale (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008) ($r = .48$, $p < .01$). To further test the scale's discriminant validity, a joint Varimax-rotated exploratory factor analysis of the six EPSI items and all items of both the PSI scale and the Parasocial

Table 1 Experience of Parasocial Interaction (EPSI) scale ($N = 198$)

While watching the clip, I had the feeling that [name]...	*M*	Min	Max	*SD*	p_{res}	r_{cit}	*f*
1. was aware of me.	2.33	1	7	1.85	1%	.64	.75
2. knew I was there.	3.12	1	7	2.26	1%	.75	.84
3. knew I was aware of him/her.	2.98	1	7	2.13	1.5%	.76	.79
4. knew I paid attention to him/her.	3.24	1	7	2.18	1%	.69	.84
5. knew that I reacted to him/her.	2.27	1	7	1.79	2.5%	.67	.79
6. reacted to what I said or did.	1.56	1	7	1.21	3%	.53	.66
Index	2.62	1	7	1.55			

Note: All six items are answered on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*do not agree at all*) to 7 (*totally agree*); [name] is replaced by the name of the TV performer; higher scores indicate a more intense parasocial experience; p_{res} = percentage of respondents that indicated that "this item is too difficult to answer"; r_{cit} = corrected item-total-correlation; f = item factor loading.

Process scale was conducted. All EPSI items loaded on a unique single factor. Proving discriminant validity, all EPSI items had also only marginal cross-loadings to other factors that consisted of items of the PSI scale and the Parasocial Process scale. These results suggest that the EPSI scale measures a unique phenomenon.

Addressing
To check if the experimental manipulation was successful, two items assessed participants' feeling of being addressed by the TV performer (e.g., "I felt addressed by [name]", $\alpha = .79$, $M = 2.48$, $SD = 1.74$).

Attractiveness
Eight items were applied to measure the perceived attractiveness of the TV performer, taken from McCroskey and McCain (1974). Items included statements like "I think [name] looks very attractive" or "I admire [name] for his/her character." All items were compiled into a mean index ($\alpha = .87$, $M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.13$).

Perspective-taking ability
Seven items measured participants' ability to adopt perspectives of other people, adapted from a scale of Davis (1980, e.g., "I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspectives"). After the removal of two items, all items were collapsed into a mean index ($\alpha = .76$; $M = 5.26$, $SD = 0.95$).

Enjoyment
Enjoyment was measured with five items taken from Hartmann and Vorderer (2010). Items assessed how interesting, enjoyable, and fun watching the TV clip was. All items were compiled into a mean index ($\alpha = .82$, $M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.26$).

Commitment to norms
Because we knew of no existing scale, participants' felt commitment to norms was measured with three newly developed items (e.g., "Picking my nose during the film clip would have felt wrong," "It would have felt rude to shut off the screen before the film clip had ended," "Shouting out loud 'You stupid dirtbag!' would have felt inappropriate"). All items were compiled into a mean index ($\alpha = .64$, $M = 2.93$, $SD = 1.61$).

Results

Treatment check

A 2 (Bodily Addressing) × 2 (Verbal Addressing) ANOVA on participants' perceived level of being addressed was computed to test for the effectiveness of the manipulation. Participants who watched the film clip with the female performer looking straight into the camera (bodily addressing) felt more addressed ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.90$) than onlookers of the clip in which the performer was recorded from her side, $M = 1.80$,

$SD = 1.25$; $F(1, 194) = 44.73$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .19$. In addition, participants who watched the film clip with the performer talking to adults (verbal addressing) felt more addressed ($M = 1.90$, $SD = 1.86$) than participants that watched the clip with the performer talking to young children, $M = 2.06$, $SD = 1.52$; $F(1, 194) = 14.83$; $p<.01$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$. The treatment was successful.

Intercorrelations

To explore how the assessed concepts were related, zero-order correlations were computed. Results are displayed in Table 2. As the table shows, viewers' parasocial experience most strongly correlated with the perceived attractiveness of the TV performer ($r = .37, p < .01$), enjoyment of the exposure situation ($r = .32, p < .01$), and bodily addressing ($r = .30$, $p < .01$). Weaker, albeit still significant correlations were obtained between viewers' parasocial experience and their commitment to norms ($r = .18, p < .01$), their perspective-taking ability ($r = .16, p < .01$), and the TV performer's verbal addressing ($r = .15$, $p < .05$).

Causes of a parasocial experience

To examine the effects of a TV performer's addressing style postulated in H1a and H1b, a 2 × 2 ANOVA was conducted, positing bodily addressing (high and low) and verbal addressing (high and low) as the independent variables, and viewers' parasocial experience as the dependent variable. In line with H1a, viewers parasocial experience was significantly more intense if bodily addressed by the TV performer ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.57$) than if not bodily addressed, $M = 2.19$, $SD = 1.39$; $F(1, 194) = 19.37$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$. In line with H1b, viewers also reported a significantly stronger parasocial experience if verbally addressed by the TV performer ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.62$) than if not verbally addressed, $M = 2.40$, $SD = 1.45$; $F(1, 194) = 4.07$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. No significant interaction effect was observed ($p = .97$). H1a and H1b were both confirmed.

Table 2 Intercorrelations of the Measured Concepts ($N = 198$)

	PE	BA	VA	PA	PTA	CN	E
Parasocial experience (PE)	—						
Bodily addressing (BA)	.30**	—					
Verbal addressing (VA)	.15**	—	—				
Perceived attractiveness (PA)	.37**	.10	.19**	—			
Perspective-taking ability (PTA)	.16**	−.05	−.00	.06	—		
Commitment to norms (CN)	.18*	.01	.02	.22**	−.08	—	
Enjoyment (E)	.32**	.30**	.23**	.50**	.03	.24**	—

Note: Bodily addressing and verbal addressing reflected experimentally manipulated conditions and were 0/1 coded.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$ (two-tailed).

The influence of a TV performer's perceived attractiveness (H2) and viewers' perspective-taking ability (H3) on a parasocial experience was examined in a hierarchical regression. To control for the effect of bodily and verbal addressing, we first regressed viewers' parasocial experience on both experimentally manipulated factors in Step 1 of the regression. Perceived attractiveness and perspective-taking ability were entered in a Step 2 of the regression.

Mirroring the results of the ANOVA, bodily addressing ($\beta = .30$, $p < .01$) and verbal addressing ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$) were both significant predictors in Step 1 of the regression. Together they accounted for 11% of the variance in viewers' parasocial experience. More importantly, perceived attractiveness and perspective-taking ability explained an significant amount of additional variance when entered in Step 2 of the regression, $\Delta R^2 = .13$, $\Delta F(2, 193) = 15.91$, $p < .01$. In line with H2, the more viewers perceived the TV performer to be attractive, the more intense their parasocial experience, $b = 0.43$, $\beta = .32$, $t(192) = 4.92$, $p < .01$. In addition, in line with H3, the stronger viewers' cognitive perspective-taking ability, the stronger their parasocial experience, $b = 0.28$, $\beta = .16$, $t(192) = 2.46$, $p < .05$. These findings support H2 and H3.

Consequences of a parasocial experience

To examine the potential consequences of a parasocial experience, we conducted two simple linear regressions. H4 assumed that the more intense viewers' parasocial experience, the more they feel committed to social norms. In line with H4, viewers' parasocial experience indeed positively predicted their norm commitment ($\beta = .18, p < .05, R^2 = .03$). H4 was supported. H5 assumed that the more intense the parasocial experience, the more viewers enjoy the exposure situation. The results of another regression show that a parasocial experience indeed substantially increased viewers' enjoyment of the exposure situation ($\beta = .32, p < .01, R^2 = .10$). Accordingly, H5 was confirmed.

Discussion

The present approach reviewed core ideas of Horton and colleagues (Horton & Strauss, 1957; Horton & Wohl, 1956) and conceptualized parasocial interaction as the immediate experience of TV viewers to be engaged in a reciprocal social encounter with a TV performer. It was argued that TV viewers, if confronted with a TV performer, may engage in automatic mindreading activities that result in a sense of mutual awareness, attention, and adjustment with a TV performer. This idea of parasocial interaction as a user experience differs from previous conceptualizations that focused on parasocial interaction as an enduring relationship (i.e., friendship) between viewers' and TV characters (e.g., Rubin et al., 1985).

Implications

EPSI scale

On the basis of the suggested conceptualization of a parasocial experience, an experimental study was conducted. A new six-item measure, the EPSI scale, was developed to assess the intensity of viewers' parasocial experience. Preliminary tests confirmed good psychometric qualities of the EPSI scale. Confirming discriminant validity, the EPSI scale was only moderately correlated with a short version of the PSI scale (Rubin & Perse, 1987) and the Parasocial Process scale (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). Factor analytical examinations also showed that items of the EPSI scale loaded on a unique single factor. Future studies are necessary to further validate the EPSI scale. It would be important, for example, to examine the scale in diverse TV settings. In addition, mean scores of the EPSI items were comparatively low. One plausible explanation is that participants rationalized their illusionary experiences after the exposure situation. Consequently, they may have agreed less to the item statements. Future studies should examine if the EPSI scale is indeed affected by viewers' rationalization processes.

Causes and consequences

A major goal of this study was to examine potential causes and consequences of a parasocial experience. To this end, participants watched TV clips that varied in the verbal and bodily addressing style of a TV performer. A core finding of the conducted experiment is that viewers report a more intense parasocial experience if the TV performer addresses them on both a bodily and a verbal level. This finding suggests that a TV performer's body posture and the direction of his or her face and eyes, as well as verbal inclusions of the audience, are crucial for the initiation and maintenance of viewers' parasocial experiences (Horton & Wohl, 1956). In addition to these experimental results, the present findings suggest that a greater perceived attractiveness of the TV performer and viewers' general ability to adopt the perspectives of other people cause more intense parasocial experiences. Results further suggest that more intense parasocial experiences lead to a heightened commitment to social norms in the exposure situation, and a greater enjoyment of the exposure situation.

Taken together, the findings contribute to research on parasocial interaction in various ways. In the past, several researchers (Cohen, 2009; Tsao, 2004) called for more experimental research on the factors underlying parasocial interaction. The present approach answered this call by experimentally analyzing the effects of a TV performer's addressing style on parasocial experiences. The current experimental study complements the few experimental studies that have been conducted in the field to date (e.g., Auter, 1992; Auter & Davis, 1991).

The present findings also suggest that the causes and consequences of parasocial experiences correspond to those suggested in previous conceptualizations of parasocial interaction. In this study, viewers reported stronger parasocial experiences the more attractive they found the TV performer. This finding resonates with previous

research that identified attractiveness as an important determinant of parasocial interaction (Schiappa et al., 2007). In addition, viewers with a stronger ability to adopt other people's perspective (Davis et al., 1987) tended to report stronger parasocial experiences in this study. This result complements a previous finding by Tsao (1996), who showed that users' cognitive empathy skill intensifies parasocial interaction (assessed with the PSI scale). There is a plausible reason why the same factors seem to determine parasocial interaction (assessed with the PSI scale) and parasocial experiences. Previous studies that applied the PSI scale tended to measure parasocial interaction as a rather enduring (parasocial) relationship. Strong relationships toward TV perfomers, however, probably develop on the basis of intense parasocial experiences (cf., Giles, 2002).

Auter and Davis (1991) showed that viewers find TV footage more enjoyable and meaningful if it features characters that are directly addressing them. In line with this result, this study shows that viewers' parasocial experience and enjoyment are closely related. The finding that a parasocial experience increases enjoyment may also explain why other studies found that TV users seek parasocial interaction to satisfy their entertainment needs (Levy & Windahl, 1984; Palmgreen et al., 1980).

The role of norms underlying parasocial interaction has been stressed by Horton and Strauss (1957), but has not been examined in previous empirical research. In this study, viewers felt more committed toward social norms the more intense their parasocial experience was. This heightened commitment to norms seems irrational and may be diminished as soon as viewers reflect upon the illusionary character of their parasocial experience. Similar automatic responses in encounters with mediated characters have been reported in the literature. For example, in an experimental study on social facilitation, Gardner and Knowles (2008) showed that participants perform better in a well-learnt task if their favorite character was displayed on a poster in front of them. The observed effect of a parasocial experience on viewers' commitment to norms complements this finding and suggests that parasocial experiences and related effects may rely on rather automatic (and thus irrational) processes (see for a similar notion in the context of computers (Nass & Moon, 2000).

Limitations

The present findings should be interpreted within the study's limitations. First, parasocial experiences have been conceptualized as an automatically occurring feeling or impression. The current study relied on retrospective self-report data to measure parasocial experiences. Retrospective self-reports, however, may provide a biased assessment of experiences (Schwarz & Oyserman, 2001). Although subjective feelings or impressions are principally observable by introspection, accurate recall may be difficult. For example, participants of this study may have partly rationalized their illusionary parasocial experience in their retrospective self-reports. Future studies may therefore complement the present approach by applying process-oriented measures of viewers' parasocial experience. For example, within a think-aloud paradigm (van Someren, Barnard, & Sandberg, 1994), viewers may continue to share their

automatic impressions during an exposure episode. These data may be related to the data obtained with the EPSI scale.

Second, the present experiment employed an exposure situation that differed from the typical TV exposure in some aspects. We applied film clips that were produced by a nonprofessional cameraman. These clips featured a female person that was not a trained TV presenter or actor. Participants also watched these clips on a computer screen, instead of on a normal television screen. Therefore, it can be argued that the applied clips do not fully resemble common TV footage. Producing new film clips, however, ensured a high internal validity of the present experiment. By producing new film clips we had more control about the manipulation of the bodily and verbal addressing. We also assumed that the fact that a human performer is represented audio-visually would be the most crucial characteristic of TV footage in the context of parasocial experiences. In addition, watching audio-visual film clips on a computer screen may be quite similar to watching the same content on a television screen. Still, future studies should seek to replicate the present findings with existing TV content, professional TV performers, and in typical TV exposure situations.

In contrast to this study, viewers may also be quite familiar with a TV performer in many TV exposure situations, because they repeatedly encountered the same performer in the past. Familiarity with a TV performer, however, may influence viewers' parasocial experience. Accordingly, it would be interesting to examine links between viewers' repeated exposure, familiarity with a performer, and their parasocial experiences in the future.

Conclusion

In summary, the present approach reviewed core ideas of Horton and colleagues (Horton & Strauss, 1957; Horton & Wohl, 1956) and conceptualized parasocial interaction as the experience of TV viewers to be engaged in an immediate, personal, and reciprocal encounter with a TV performer. The intensity of the parasocial experience depended on the way TV performers bodily address their viewers, on the perceived attractiveness of the TV performer, and on users' perspective-taking ability. In addition, more intense parasocial experiences increased viewers' commitment to norms, and their enjoyment of the exposure situation.

Notes

1 The clip we used was produced for the present experiment by a nonprofessional cameraman. The clip featured a female person that was not a trained TV presenter or actor. We still refer to this film clip as a TV clip and to the performer as a TV performer, as we supposed that the audio-visual representation of a filmed human performer is the most crucial characteristic of TV clips in the context of parasocial experiences.

2 We applied the revised 10-item version of the PSI scale (Rubin & Perse, 1987; e.g., "I see [name] as a natural, down-to-earth person"). Respondents rated all items on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*I do not agree at all*) to 7 (*I totally agree*). Items were compiled into a mean index ($\alpha = .86$, $M = 2.59$, $SD = 1.08$). The PSI Process scales of Schramm and

Hartmann (2008) were applied as a short version that consisted of the 12 items displayed in their article. Respondents rated all items on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*I do not agree at all*) to 7 (*I totally agree*). After removing the inverted items "Whatever [name] said or did—I kept still" and "I hardly thought about why [name] did certain things s/he did", the remaining 10 items were compiled into a mean index ($\alpha = .75$, $M = 2.54$, $SD = .91$).

3 All items were in Dutch. The study was conducted with a Dutch sample in the Netherlands. The Dutch EPSI scale and the original items we used in the study can be requested from T.H. The English version of the EPSI scale has been translated for this article.

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Horton 과 Wohl 의 재 정리: 시청자들의 의사 사회적 상호작용의 경험 연구

요약

Horton 과 Wohl(1956)의 연구에 연계하어, 현재접근은 시청자들의 의사 사회적 상호작용경험을 개념화하고 실증적으로 연구하였다. 의사 사회적 상호작용경험들의 원인과 결과들이 실험되었다. 이를 위해, 의사 사회상호작용 경험스케일이 도입되었다. 2 x 2 실험은 그들이 텔레비젼 연기자들에 의해 주어질때 더욱 강해지는 것을 보여주고 있다. 게다가, 더욱 많은 시청자들이 연기자들을 매력적으로 인지할 수록 그들의 인지능력은 증대하며, 그들의 사회적 경험은 더욱강화되었다. 강한정도의 사회적 경험은 높은 정도의 사회적 규범에 대한 인정도를 높였으며 노출정도의 더욱 큰 정도의 즐기기를 초래하였다.

Horton y Wohl Revisitado:
Explorando las Experiencias de Interacción Para-social de los Televidentes

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Resumen

Conectando otra vez con Horton y Wohl (1956), el enfoque presente conceptualiza y examina empíricamente la experiencia de interacción para-social de los televidentes con un actor de televisión. Las causas y los resultados de la experiencia de interacción para-social son examinados. Con ese propósito, una nueva escala de la Experiencia de Interacción Para-social es introducida. En un experimento de 2 (dirigiéndose con el cuerpo) por 2 (dirigiéndose verbalmente) entre sujetos (N = 198) los televidentes reportaron una experiencia para-social más intensa si el actor de televisión se dirigía a ellos a nivel físico y verbal. Además, cuanto más los televidentes percibían al actor como atractivo y más fuerte era su habilidad para tomar su perspectiva, más intensa era su experiencia para-social. La experiencia para-social más fuerte resultó en un mayor compromiso hacia las normas sociales y un mayor placer de exposición a la situación.

Palabras claves: para-social, interacción, televisión, personajes, dirigirse, atracción, toma de perspectiva, normas, placer

Horton et Wohl, revisités :

Une exploration de l'expérience d'interaction parasociale des téléspectateurs

Tilo Hartmann et Charlotte Goldhoorn

Revenant à Horton et Wohl (1956), l'approche présentée ici conceptualise et étudie de façon empirique l'expérience d'interaction parasociale des téléspectateurs avec un artiste télévisuel. Les causes et les résultats de l'expérience d'interaction parasociale sont examinés. À cette fin, une nouvelle échelle de l'expérience d'interaction parasociale est présentée. Dans une étude 2 (interpellation corporelle) x 2 (interpellation verbale) entre sujets (N = 198), les téléspectateurs ont rapporté avoir vécu une expérience parasociale plus intense s'ils étaient interpelés par l'artiste télévisuelle sur un plan corporel et verbal. Également, plus les téléspectateurs trouvaient l'artiste séduisante et plus leur capacité à changer de point de vue était grande, alors plus leur expérience parasociale était intense. Une expérience parasociale plus intense entraînait un plus grand attachement aux normes sociales et un plus grand plaisir tiré de la situation d'exposition.

Mots clés : parasocial, interaction, télévision, personnages, interpellation, attirance, changement de perspective, normes, plaisir

对 Horton 和 Wohl 理论的再修改：对观众准社会交往的研究

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【摘要 :】

本文回溯到 Horton 和 Wohl (1956) 的理论 , 对准社会交往进行定义并以实证研究检验了观众与电视演员准社会交往的经历。此外 ,本文检验了准社会交往的原因与结果。为此本文提出了一个新的准社会交往经验测量方法。在一个 2 (身体) × 2 (口头) 组间实验（n=198）中，如果电视演员以身体和口头语言与观众交流，观众就会有更强烈的准社会交往经历。此外，更多的观众认为表演有吸引力，并且，他们转换角度考虑的能力越强 , 准社会交往的经验更加强烈。较强的准社会交往经验导致对社会规范更高的承诺以及获得更大的观看享受。

Horton und Wohl neu gedacht: Zuschauer und ihr Erleben von Parasozialer Interaktion

Anknüpfend an die Arbeiten von Horton und Wohl (1956), erarbeiten wir in diesem Artikel einen neuen Ansatz zur parasozialen Interaktion von Zuschauern mit TV-Darstellern, der dann empirisch überprüft wird. Die Gründe und Wirkungen von parasozialem Interaktionserleben werden untersucht. Schlussendlich wird eine neue Skala eingeführt: Erleben von Parasozialer Interaktion. In einem Experiment mit 2 (körperliche Ansprache) x 2 (verbale Ansprache) Between-Subject Design (N=198) berichteten die Zuschauer über ein intensiveres parasoziales Erleben, wenn sie vom TV-Darsteller körperlich und verbal angesprochen wurden. Darüber hinaus war das parasoziale Erleben umso stärker, je attraktiver die Zuschauer den Darsteller fanden und je stärker ihre Fähigkeit zur Perspektivenübernahme ausgeprägt war. Ein stärkeres parasoziales Erleben führte zu größerer Zustimmung bezüglich sozialer Normen und einem größeren Enjoyment der Sehsituation.

Schlüsselbegriffe: parasozial, Interaktion, Fernsehen, Charaktere, Ansprache, Attraktivität, Perspektivenübernahme, Normen, Enjoyment